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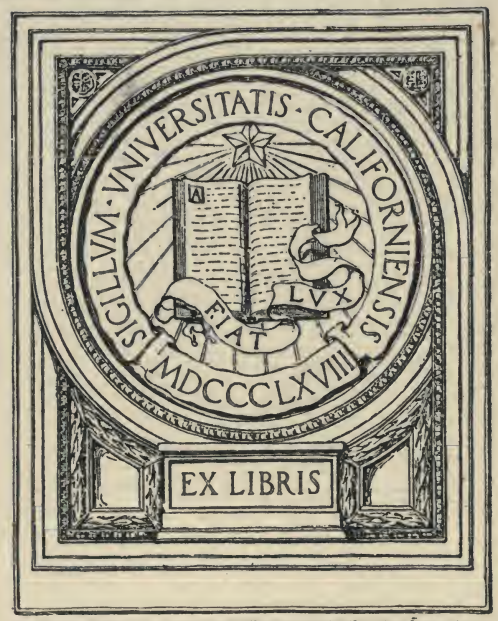
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TWO PHASES OF CRITICISM
HISTORICAL AND AESTHETIC

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TWO PHASES OF CRITICISM

Historical and Aesthetic

LECTURES DELIVERED ON
THE LARWILL FOUNDATION OF KENYON COLLEGE
MAY SEVENTH AND EIGHTH, 1913

BY
GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

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I

HISTORICAL CRITICISM

I

HISTORICAL CRITICISM

WHAT is the act of criticism? It has lately been succinctly described as a repetition of the creative act of genius originating a work of art; to criticise is to re-create. The critic is genius at one remove; he is not unlike an actor on the stage, and incarnates in his mind, as the actor embodies in his person, another's work; only thus does he understand art, realize it, know it; and having arrived at this, his task is done. This is the last word of modern theory. It is obvious that it simplifies the function of criticism, and relieves it apparently of much of its old service. It relieves it, for example, of judgment; the critic understands, he does not judge. It relieves it of interpretation; the critic presents, he does not interpret. Strictly speaking, it seems a private affair that he is engaged in, an appreciation within his own consciousness; for the public to benefit by this method, every one must become his own critic, since to create or re-create is a deeply personal act. I pass no judgment on

this theory now, but I shall return to it in my second lecture and shall endeavor to draw out its fruitful side. I desire, however, to state it at the outset, in order to throw into relief against it the matter of the present discourse, which deals with an older conception of the critic's service.

The theory whose main position I have outlined, limits art narrowly to its own world, the aesthetic sphere of the soul in which genius works and from which its creations proceed, a world transcending that in which human life habitually goes on, and existing by virtue of its ideality on a higher plane of being. The world of art has an absolute and eternal quality which it imparts to its creations; and one feels this the more in proportion as he has intimacy with them, enters into and lives in their world, and achieves its reality by virtue of that union with the creative mind which the new theory sets forth as the end of criticism. But works of art have also a purely phenomenal side; once created, they belong to the world of phenomena, and having come into existence there, they are subject to the order of time, to

current human conditions, to changing judgments intellectual and moral, to varieties of fortune; in short, they are no longer isolated and in a place of their own, the artist's mind, but are part of a larger world. They put on many relations, and thereby enlarge their being; they generate new interests, and thereby vary their significance; and the older criticism took note of these things. In brief, works of art take their place in time, and give rise to a history of art. They are terms of a temporal series; they "look before and after;" and however isolate and absolute may be their aesthetic value, they offer, to say the least, other pertinent phrases of interest, when taken as a development in time.

The older criticism concerned itself much with germinal origins and shaping influences, questions of race, climate, geographical position, social environment, political fortune. I need only recall to you the brilliant monographs in which Taine made the art of the North emanate from fog, shadow and damp, and the art of the South weave its being of sun, color and broad prospects, till it almost seemed that poetry was a branch of climatology, that temperature

was race-temperament, war and commerce other names for epic and comedy, and genius rather a social phenomenon than a personal power. This resolution of facts into general causes, of particularity into law, of the individual into the mass, belonged to the bent of his mind, the mind of a philosopher; it is naturally irritating to those who find personality to be the fiery core of life; but his method brings out the distinguishing features, as wholes, of the artistic periods to which it is applied, maps as it were their local and temporal emergence as units of history, and displays on the background of the common *milieu* the group-traits of each country and age. Work of all kinds is the fruit of a partnership between man and the world. Taine's method brings into full view the world-factor, and by its emphasis and preoccupation with this puts the objective element to the fore in the genesis of art.

The balance is redressed by the psychologists, who, in turn putting the subjective element to the fore, show as ardent a will to be absorbed in personality as Taine to escape from it. To them the individual is all; and not only

that, but what is most peculiar and *sui generis* in him, his idiosyncrasy, is idealized as the fount and substance of his genius. Often it would seem that his title to be reckoned among the sons of light is not clear till some abnormality is discovered in him. Criticism loses itself in biography and medicine, gossip, chatter and pathology; and of late that defective, delinquent degenerate, genius, seems hunted to his lair in the subconscious self. In recent years, too, there has sprung up a third group, a hybrid of the sociologists and the psychologists, which in the name of comparative literature has constituted of the republic of letters an international state in lieu of ordinary society, and has found its controlling factors in great personalities such as Petrarch, Rousseau, Goethe, and, secondary to them, a vast network of influences working between nations and epochs; and in the hands of these scholars criticism has become an anatomy of texts.

In these various modern diversions and divagations, determined by the scientific spirit of the last century, criticism shows a temper analogous to that which at an earlier time in the

scholastic world committed it to logic in the classification of the kinds of literature, epic, drama, lyric and the like, and to rhetoric in the formulation of the rules. It is plain that in all such labors, ancient or modern, criticism gets ever further away from the work of art itself; it leaves the matter of life, which art is, for the matter of knowledge; and when we consider the extraordinary variety of the tasks which criticism latterly has set for itself, whatever their value and interest as matter of knowledge may be, it certainly seems time to ask whether there be not a more defined sphere, less confounded with all knowledge, for criticism to move in, and a peculiar function for that art to fulfil which in the hands of its great masters, the poets, has been an art of interpreting and manifesting life at its height of power in genius.

Shall we, then, return to the new definition? To criticise is to re-create the work of art as it was in the mind of the original artist. But how to do this? It is a simple matter to re-create from what is before us, from the image or the text, "a vision of our own;" but to require

that the vision be the same that was in the mind of the artist places it at once in the field of history; it is the state of mind of a man in the past, a particular man in his own time and place, that is to be recovered. What if the work of art be that of a race different in temperament, a Persian poem, for example? or one of an unfamiliar technique, like a Japanese print? or one of an antiquated dramatic habit and a primitive morality, such as an Aeschylean trilogy? It is true that in art there is a universal element that, broadly speaking, appeals to all minds that are capable of receiving it; but in successive times it is dressed in the trappings of its own age, and attended by local and temporal associations, and though it may be interpreted in diverse tongues, it has a different tone and accent and offers a different signification in each. Just as it is necessary to read the language before one can understand the text, it is needful to endue the mind with various knowledge before it can take in foreign ideas and emotions in their original sense; and, indeed, if one would appropriate the past, as it was, he must put on the whole garment

of time. The end given being to realize the state of mind of a man at a past moment,—it may be in China or Peru,—the office of historical criticism seems an indispensable preliminary; and by historical criticism I mean all those studies, sociological, psychological or comparative, which assist in the representation of the past, and amplify and clarify historical knowledge. They are essential preliminaries to that task of re-creating the work of art as it was in the mind of the original artist. The extent of this preparatory study, in each instance, depends upon the case in hand; but in any case the critic must know the artist and the world he lived in, to reproduce his mental states with precision, or even approximately, and this necessity bears the more heavily upon him in proportion to the presence in the work of art of what is alien in time, race and method.

The injunction to re-create what was in the mind of the artist, when put forth with the implication that historical criticism can be dispensed with, derives its plausibility from the inveterate habit of the intellect of regarding life not as a perpetual flux, but as fixed. This

is the mother of many practical fallacies. If there were only the European world and our own century, the maxim might work with sufficient success; but no sooner do we go about the world than we find other races and civilizations with an art of their own which at first view is inscrutable to us; and no sooner do we, in our own studies, go out of our own time and retrace the course of our own civilization than we discover art which is equally unfamiliar and enigmatic to us, such as Byzantine mosaic, for example, and primitive art generally; and even in the literature of the past there is much which has little or no real meaning to us. History, indeed, shows us our ancestors encountering successively alien literatures and appropriating them as they became gradually intelligible, and in each case a Renaissance attended the appropriation,—a Celtic, Greek, Italian, Gothic Renaissance. History unfolds such a flux, not merely of events and things in general, but of art in all its forms. But the intellect, in connection with its other systems of abstract thought conceived as fixed, has elaborated a logical scheme of art, in which

all art is contained and is equally accessible to the mind. Art, however, is not thus known in the abstract like science, but only in the flux, in the concrete; that is its nature.

What, you will say, "is not line the same beauty in a Greek or Japanese or French work? has not color the same value? is not the human eye the same the world over?" Well, to begin with, the line is not the same, and it has different connotations; and so, also, of the color; and the human eye is as various as the soul that sees through it. Art is not like mathematics, something to be cast into identical formulas in every time and place. Art does not, like science, set forth a permanent order of nature, the enduring skeleton of law. Two factors primarily determine its works: one is the idea in the mind of the artist, the other is his power of expression; and both these factors are extremely variable. Furthermore, one does not make progress in art as one does in science, along a straight line as it were, with continual increase of knowledge, conserving always what was gained and adding to it, proceeding onward to higher branches. We foresee no limit

to scientific advancement in the future, and in scientific truth there is nothing dead; science is always a living and growing body of knowledge; but art on the contrary has many times run its course to an end, and exhausted its vital power. The growth of art seems to be in cycles, and often its vigorous lifetime is restricted to a century or two. The periods of distinctive drama, Greek, English, Spanish, fall within such a limit; the schools of painting and sculpture likewise; and, in poetry, the Victorian age or the school of Pope will serve as examples. The theme and the manner, the interest and the skill, are perpetually changing from century to century and from country to country. There is immense variation also within the limit of any one group: in Greek sculpture, from the archaic figures of the gods to the moulds of the Parthenon; in Renaissance painting, from the primitives to the masterpieces of the art. One can re-create what was in the mind of a mathematician a thousand years ago, recapture the truth of the intellect wherever it may have once come to light; but the image of art, that infinite variable of perception and

expression in the individual,—that is not easily re-created, at least, not with certainty and in its original fulness. To leave out of account the difficulties of understanding that arise in primitive and alien art, even in the case of that art where both ideas and expression are at their height of genius in our own civilization, —for example, in Phidias and Michel Angelo, —do you think it is a facile task to re-create the work as it was in the mind of the artist? It is not so simple as observing a sunset; it is not merely to open your eyes and see; you must first create the eye to see with.

Is it not our experience that even with contemporary art of our own race there is much uncertainty in our vision? Do we not very often have different impressions, one from another, of characters in a novel or drama, a different music from the same poem? In the contents of our several minds regarding literature and art in general there is no such agreement as in the case of mathematics or logic; and we are, after all, well aware that we, at best, accomplish only an approximation to what was in the mind of the original genius. Art is expression; what is

expressed is often the vision of a subtle and powerful soul, and also his experience with his vision; and however vivid and skilful he may be in the means of expression, yet it is frequently found that the master-spell in his work is something felt to be indefinable and inexpressible. It is our instinct to be modest in the presence of great art, and rather to be grateful for so much of its meaning as may reach us than to flatter ourselves that we know it as it was in the artist's mind. If this is true of our own literature in our own time, how much more hardly shall we be persuaded that we see with the eyes of the old Anglo-Saxon wanderer, of troubadour and mime and lyre-player, that we hear the nightingale like Hafiz and drink the wine-cup like Omar! It is often difficult to believe in the truth of political history as it is presented by this and that conflicting writer re-creating men and their actions. How much more contingent and unstable must seem this history of art, re-creating the thoughts of men, their imaginative visions, the spiritual intimations of the brooding life within them, their guesses, their hopes and fears,—their souls! There is a history of

art, a geography and catalogue of it in time, biographical details and technical processes; but far more than in the case of political history is it a shadow-picture of the past, a mere approximation full of conjecture and mystery and blank gaps where time has done its perfect work. I do not care greatly for the history of art except as it exists in its surviving monuments, and I do not care for these primarily for their historical value; but I am sure that art, being as I have described it, a Protean play of personality in many places and ages, cannot be understood as it was in its original creation except by the full aid of historical criticism in all its forms; and even with that aid the recreation of art will prove still only a doubtful resurrection of the soul that has passed away, —a portrait, perhaps, but one in whose eyes and expression there is an unshared secret.

I am not disposed to relinquish historical criticism; nay, rather I must cling to it as my only hope of qualifying myself to undertake that purely aesthetic criticism by which I may at last become one with the soul of the artist and see his vision with the meaning and atmosphere

it had to himself. So much of art is antique and foreign, so much of what is racially our own has become alien to my feelings and ideas by the gradual detachment of time, that I need an interpreter between me and this dead and dying world of the past,—I need precisely the interpretation of knowledge that historical criticism gives. True, it is not aesthetic criticism; but aesthetic criticism, in the sense of a re-creation of art as it was in the past, for me is impossible without it.

In the same way that I cannot spare interpretation, I am reluctant also to excuse criticism from the function of judgment. It is said that the critic is concerned with two questions,—"What was in the mind of the artist? Has he expressed it?" To reply to these is the whole of the critic's business. Here, again, the new theory narrowly limits the critic to the aesthetic field. The intention is to debar the critic from any inquiry into the nature of what was in the artist's mind, or any examination of the means of expression employed, or any judgment upon the value of the completed work. Whether the artist's intention was one proper to his art,

whether his method was well or ill adapted to its material and processes, whether the result was worth the pains, are questions that can find no place. Granted the artist's aim, has he won success? and there an end. It is assumed, you observe, that there are no rules that are binding in the art, and that the artist himself is a man utterly free, without fealty or responsibility of any sort, of whom nothing is to be required except success in working his own will. Such freedom may belong to the aesthetic world, and constitute, indeed, the normal condition of life there,—the artist's life; but I find these assumptions too sweeping when they are introduced into the world of criticism. I say nothing of works of art in the process of their creation, at present; but I repeat that, once created, they enter into the ordinary world of men and there they are subject to intellectual and moral values, being variously useful or harmful, as well as to analysis of their technique in the light of tradition. They have passed out of the artist's creative mind, and are part of the larger human world,—a lower and different world, it may be, but one in which communal inter-

ests and values have justly a great place, often to the detriment of the sporadic individual, though an artist. In the social world, if innovation has its privileges, tradition has its rights. The rules of any craft grow out of experience; if an original and inventive artist finds novel ways, he does not, generally, altogether invalidate the old rules; most often he merely amends and improves them. The rules assume no finality; they embody past tradition, and incorporate new experience as soon as it has been warranted by success. It is true that genius is always breaking rules and with the happiest fortune; it is the critic's delight to be acknowledging instances of this constantly, for it means vitality and discovery; but breaking rules is not genius, and criticism does a very useful service generally, in such art as engraving, for example, in keeping under close observation the methods used or attempted, in the light of the tradition of the various crafts where hand and eye work together. Neither is success genius. It is still pertinent for criticism to inquire into the quality of the success, its value; and I am conservative enough to add that the critic

may even ask whether it was right. Aesthetic freedom is like free speech; it is, indeed, a form of free speech. We can never have too much of it. But the wisdom of what is said, the value of what is created,—that is another matter; and we who find in the merely human world no guide so safe as reason, look to criticism to declare the judgment of reason on the intellectual and moral values of art.

But has art any intellectual and moral values? Is it not altogether aesthetic, a matter of sense-perception? does it not exist, as I have said, always in the flux, in the individual and concrete, in the phenomenal? how shall any abstract element, any pure concept, anything of the reason be found in that which is by definition a thing of the senses? The doctrine of the particularity of art is carried to this extreme, that the presence of the universal element, the reason, is denied in it. You may name a bronze statue Liberty, or a painted figure in a city hall Commerce, or a marble form in a temple Athene or Venus; but what is really there is only a representation of a single woman. And, likewise, in all art and literature there are only

single objects grouped in a purely phenomenal series, such as life presents to us in its successive momentary flow. I do not see that art, in being phenomenal, escapes from the reason any more than life does, which is also phenomenal in the same sense. The faculties of the mind work on the material of art precisely as they work on the material of life. There is this difference, however, between the two worlds of life and art, that the former is a chance medley, an arrangement that happens, while the latter is an arrangement in which the higher faculties have intervened; it is an intended arrangement. In the casual happenings of life we find tragedy and comedy, but in the art of the drama they have been freed from incongruous and confusing admixtures, and are seen in a purer form. Among the living we find beauty, but in the sculptures of the Parthenon it is unveiled to our eyes in a more apparent form. The intervention of genius has charged phenomena with something new, vital and transforming, namely, with its own personality. It is conceded, in the new theory, that the contents of the work of art, its meaning, is constituted of

the artist's personality expressed therein. What a lean and diminished personality that would be from which intellectual and moral elements were excluded! The difficulty appears to lie in finding a passage for intellectual and moral elements into that phenomenal and highly concrete world in which alone art is expressed. Can the gap between the abstract world of reason and the concrete world of sense be bridged? It appears to me that it is bridged in art precisely as it is in the normal exercise of our faculties in the routine of ordinary life.

The concrete fact of experience is the base upon which the fabric of reason rests, for our faculties work only in conjunction with such experience; and I suppose no one would contest the liability of the world of art to be philosophized upon in common with other observed phenomena; but my contention goes further than that and maintains that the artist may express in his work what he designs others to draw from it in the way of the intellect as well as in the way of the senses. It is obvious that the concrete object is habitually employed to express the abstract, by convention for example,

as in the case of the flag, or of the attributes that characterize and designate the goddess, such as the doves of Venus. It is a closer connection that exists when the concrete is used, not symbolically, but as an illustration, in the case of the parable, for instance. The characters and events of the parable are entirely individual and particular; but its content, its meaning, what it expresses, is a general truth or rule of life. The story is, in fact, no part of the meaning, but merely its organ of expression. As one proceeds into the more complex forms of art, and into its higher realms, the part of the reason, — that faculty which takes note of relations and identifies the universal, — though it may be more subtle, is still engrossing; and to me, indeed, gives its soul to the work. It is true that the creative faculty has for its material means of expression only perceptions stored in memory, which it remoulds and gives back to the world changed and in a new arrangement of line, color and action, in statues, pictures, poems; but in this remoulding the higher powers of the mind have had a hand, and have planted in it their peculiar

work. The creative faculty is not merely aesthetic, or sense-perceiving; but it gathers into its energy the whole play of personality, and is a power of the total soul. The remoulding of the world that takes place in the artist's soul and is expressed in his finished work is a new creation; it is not a mirror of what was, a return to the preëxisting reality, a copy; it is a new world. Taken in its whole extent as the general world of art, it is a rationalized and spiritualized world, the world that ought to be, an ideal world, though found only fragmentarily in any individual or period or country. Art is not a spontaneous generation and geyser, as it were, of the senses at play in their own world of mere phenomena; but it is a world-creator, the maker of a new and complete world, one not superficial and momentary merely, but a world with meaning, loaded with all the significance that man has found in his spiritual life.

Were art indeed to shrink to the merely phenomenal, how would it lose its great place in the thoughts of men! So far from being the filmy material of the senses, we have long

looked on it as the spiritual substance of the past. Men and kingdoms, civilizations, pass away; but they have left a monument in their arts, and especially in the fine arts they have stamped an imprint of their souls,—their earthly immortality. Athens passes from barbarian to barbarian, but on the crest of the Acropolis, and in the world-blown leaves of the Academy, Greek genius survives. Rome piles ruin over ruin on the Capitol, but Virgil stands free of mortal decay. Art that is so deathless can derive its vigor only from the spirit itself. Genius is that in which the soul of a race burns at its brightest, revealing and preserving its vision; works of art are great and significant in proportion to the clarity and fulness with which they incarnate this vision. That is the doctrine which we have believed. What art expresses and records is the spiritual truth of the past as it was perceived and embodied by the most highly gifted among nations. It is not meant that the artist, in arriving at truth, must follow the way of the scientist, or, in stating it, the way of the philosopher. He has his own way, none too clear

even to himself, by which he becomes the typical soul of his race, embodying its convictions, hopes and despairs, in his sympathetic and assimilating personality; and in expressing himself, he stamps an image of the Greek or Persian or Italian soul in his epoch. It is a commonplace that all creative art proceeds by a principle of selection, which takes from the store of memory what is appropriate to the work in hand; into this principle of selection, which is the guide, enter race-instincts, beliefs, preferences, varieties of special knowledge, local and temporal interests and much else which the artist has in community with his people, and by virtue of this he is representative of them. The intellectual and moral habit of the race and its spiritual outlook are a part of this common endowment. The artist need not be himself a thinker; he will, nevertheless, embody the thoughts of his time. He absorbs civilization, and he may give it out unconsciously, obeying the instinctive choices that belong to his personality, without any distinct volition. I am far from maintaining that an artist realizes the truth he expresses; but it is in his work

with or without his consent. He does not arrive at it, as ordinary thinkers do, by discursive reasoning, formulate it, and so include it in his work; his processes are more rapid and vital. We are accustomed to call them intuitive and inspirational; but whatever the process is, the spiritual truth remains the same. He does not state it either, as ordinary thinkers do, abstractly; he places it before us, as we say, in the life itself,—a statue, a painting, a poem. It is not the less intellectual and moral truth, spiritual truth, because it is presented in a marble pediment, a frescoed nave or an acted drama. Gravitation is not the less scientific truth because it is manifest in a falling body or a revolving system instead of in a mathematical formula. There is a difference in the form of statement between concrete and abstract; but truth is one and the same in both. In science the truth is knowledge; in art the truth is life. General truth enters into art, it seems to me, though under a different guise from that it wears in science, with equal ease and certainty and in a more vivid form; and though it by no means enters always and at

all times into art, yet great art commonly owes its significance to the presence in it of such truth.

Perhaps I should amplify and bring out more in detail the distinction between art and nature and their several worlds. Nature exists in a fixed order with which man can interfere only slightly, and then only in strict dependence on and in alliance with natural law, as, for example, by cutting canals, cultivating soils, felling forests. Nature, however, when it enters into the mind as a picture, is much more plastic,—so much so, indeed, that the inner world of each one of us is, in some respects, peculiar to himself. Each of us eliminates much from notice and organizes what he preserves in a fashion of his own. The artist has such a world of his own,—a vision constituted of what he has seen and cared for, of what was significant to him; but in this inner world of memories there is no such fixity and order, no such unalterable necessity, as exists in the natural world; it can be reconstituted in the mind, and thus is created a new world, a better world it may be, which the artist embodies in his work. He does not express,

indeed, his whole inner world; but he gives us in his art fragments of it, phases and moments, which seem to him its most interesting parts. Thus Plato gave us the "Republic" and the "Laws," an ideal state framed by himself, like nothing that ever was. Thus the Greek sculptors gave us that "marble race of gods and men," a perfection of physical and moral beauty that had never been visible before to men's eyes; and the Greek poets gave in epic, tragedy and lyric a vision of practical, ethical and emotional life, which for clarity, profundity and charm had not before existed. Greek art, taken all together, seems to re-create the race anew. Similarly, Christian art in its mediaeval and Renaissance masterpieces of architecture, painting and music seemed to re-create the human spirit anew; and in modern times the landscape painters seem to have re-created the external world—light, space, color—anew. Art, you observe, is not a reproduction; the reality that remains in it out of the world that was, is only a residuum; the characteristic part, the vital and illuminating part, is what the artist has brought new-born in his own soul,—that which never

was before. Necessity is our lot in nature; the world of art is the place of the spirit's freedom; there the soul criticises the world, accepts and rejects it, amends it, has its own will with it as if it were clay, and remakes it; and the image thus remade in his spirit returns to the external world in the form of the completed work of art. Art is the place of the soul's freedom; there it forges its dream, unhampered; there, age after age, race after race, it gives its dream to the world that is. It is not singular that men should exalt the sphere of art as being the highest grade of man's being, and hold in profound and long reverence what is elaborated there, and celebrate its great masters as the heirs of an eternal fame; for it is in that sphere that the growth of the human spirit goes on, that its new revelations and enlightenments occur, that its spiritual progress lies. What would the centuries behind us be without the antique beauty, the Christian glory, the continuing life of art in poetry and music? Material civilization would, indeed, remain,—wealth, transportation, communication, mechanical crafts, the toil of the land and the sea; but the soul

would have no annals. It is because art is the place of the soul's vitality that it has been so cherished and jealously preserved by the master-races and the master-spirits of every race. The soul has written its history in art, and there it still writes its aspirations, insights and accomplishments, embodying its visions in its works.

Such, it seems to me, is the prime contrast between art and nature,—an opposition of freedom to necessity, of the soul to the body, of spirituality to materialism. Art is the soul's confession. I should be ill-content if works of art, taken individually, yielded to the critic only a momentary experience of the senses and the feelings, as if they were merely disparate objects of nature. I desire to know their meaning to the soul; and that intellectual and moral elements enter into their meaning, and that without the coöperation of the reason they are incompletely known, seems to me plain. The singular thing about the records of the soul's life is their great diversity in different countries and epochs, their lack of progressive coherence, their reflection of life from various and multi-

form facets. Art, as I have said, seems to have its career in limited and comparatively brief cycles, dissociated and disconnected one from another. Each school, each age, each race has its own art, often highly individualized and peculiar to itself. Genius has an eruptive character; it appears, discharges and expires, with no apparent law; each race, in respect to its genius, is a variable star,—it burns and fades and burns again. The diversity of art not only makes interpretation necessary to its understanding, but also renders judgment of its value, intellectual, moral, technical, very useful, both in guiding the mind in its choice and in establishing the relative place that any particular artist or art period has in the whole field. It is the extraordinary intellectual and moral value of Greek art, as well as its fine aesthetic quality, that gives supreme importance to its works; and the same thing holds true of English, Italian and French literature. Contemplation without judgment is a barren attitude. It is not necessary that judgment should be of the comparative rank of this or that, higher or lower, or of its legitimacy or illegitimacy. Judgment

is not of one sort, but various; it may not even be explicit, but may reside in the degree and quality of the pleasure or pain felt in the presence of art; but, whatever be its particular subject or mode of statement, some judgment disclosing the worth of the work of art seems to me not only appropriate, but an essential part of the critic's service. If art is to be known historically,—and that is clearly the meaning of the injunction to re-create works of art as they were in the minds of the original maker, —then criticism must be both historical and judicial; it must re-create the past in environment and temperament, and it must analyze the contents of art, in any particular case, to discover its worth.

The revolt against historical and judicial criticism, the attempt to confine the critic to an act of contemplation or simple intuition and whatever may result from that in his mind, in the belief that he will thus repeat what was in the mind of the artist, springs, I think, from a discontent with that immersion in the dead past of knowledge which is often the scholar's lot, and from a desire to confine our interest

in art within those limits where art is alive. I sympathize with this discontent and this desire. It is true that in historical criticism the mind travels far from the work of art itself, and makes a long detour through biography and social and political history; and often it arrives at its true task only through linguistics and archaeology. This is wearisome, especially if one is really interested in art and letters. It is true also that in analyzing the contents of epic and drama, tales of chivalry, Eastern fables and Northern sagas, the mind is dealing often with dead intellect and dead morals, with antiquated methods, with what was inchoate in the primitive and decaying in the overripe; in a word, with what belongs in the tomb, from which as a matter of fact much of it comes. But that is the lot of the scholar. "My days among the dead are passed," is the inscription over his Inferno. But if one insists on re-creating in his own mind precisely what was in the mind of the original artist,—or, since that is confessedly hopeless, on approximating that ideal as closely as possible,—then, I see no help for it. History is a thing of the dead past.

It is an embalmment, wearing a mummified resemblance to life. Many are the voices in our time, beginning with Emerson, that have cried, "Away with it!" "Let us sweep our houses clean of death," they say, "and have only life for a housemate." There is a group of young men in Italy who advocate the destruction of the art of the past there; they say that it is in the way. If anything in the past is worth preserving, surely it is the history of the soul, and if any history is worth knowing, it is that history. Any pains that any scholar may be put to, in acquiring that knowledge, is worth while; but, after all, death enters also into the history of the soul, and much that is recorded there is no longer vital, no longer of this world. Yet it is true, in realizing the dead selves of mankind, the soul accumulates power, breadth of outlook, tolerance and especially, I think, faith and hope. The scholar who accumulates in himself the human past has something of that wisdom which goes, in individual life, with a long memory. This is the service of historical criticism, that it stores and vivifies memory: it is a great service, and I would not dis-

pense with it; but, especially in the world of art, which is the most intense realm of life, one is often fain to ask,—"Is there no rescue from this reign of death, which is history, and how shall it be accomplished?" It is to this question I shall address myself to-morrow evening.

II

AESTHETIC CRITICISM

II

AESTHETIC CRITICISM

IS it an error to relegate art to the dead past and translate it into history? Works of art are not like political events and persons; they do not pass at once away. The Hermes of Praxiteles is still with us. Is it really the same Hermes that it was when it was made? Is its personal identity a fixed state, or does its personality, like our own, change in the passage of time? May it not be the nature of art to cast off what is mortal, and emancipate itself from the mind of its creator? Is it truly immortal, still alive, or only a stone image forever the same,—a petrifaction, as it were, of the artist's soul at a certain moment? or is it possible, on the other hand, that such a life really abides in art as to make what is immortal in the work greatly exceed that mortal and temporary part which historical criticism preserves? Let us ignore the historical element, and consider what is left in the critical act, still conceived as a re-creation of the image, but the re-creation of the image before us apart from any attempt to realize

what was in the artist's mind, or with only a passing reference to that.

Expression is the nucleus of the artist's power. What is expression? It is the process of externalizing what was in the artist's mind, in some object of sense which shall convey it to others. The material used may be actual form and color, as in painting and sculpture; or imaginary objects and actions through the medium of language, as in literature; or pure sound, as in music: always there is some material which is perceived by the senses and intelligible only through their mediation. Slight, indeed, would be the artist's power and inept his skill, if he should not so frame the lineaments of his work as to stamp on the senses of all comers the same intelligible image, and give for the bodily eye what the bodily eye can see in picture, statue or story. The work of art, however, is not merely the material object, but that object charged with the personality of the artist. It is in his power to make that charge effective that his true faculty of expression lies. The material object — form, color, action, sound — is enveloped in his feeling; the words he uses are loaded

with his meanings and tones. His personality is immaterial, and cannot be bodied forth; hence, the most essential and significant part of what he expresses, that which clothes the material object with its spirituality, is dependent in a supreme degree on suggestion, on what can be only incompletely set forth, on half-lights and intimations, and the thousand subtleties which lie on the borderland of the inexpressible.

In so far as a work of art is a thing of nature, it can be expressed materially with the more adequacy; in so far as it is a thing of the spirit, of personality, it is less subject to complete and certain expression; and in all art there are these two elements. In that process of re-creating the image which we are now examining, the mind's fortune with these two elements is unequal; so far as the material part is concerned, normal eyes will see the same thing, normal intelligence will grasp the same thing, in figure, action and event; but when it is a question of realizing the spirit, differences begin to emerge and multiply. Rifts of temperament and varieties of experience between artist and spectator make chasms of misunderstand-

ing and misappreciation. How diverse are the representations in the mind finally, as revealed in our tastes and judgments! The same image, mirrored in individuals, becomes radically different in opposed minds, and each is apt to believe that his own is the true and only one. It is a commonplace that every reader thinks that he is Hamlet. What a number of Hamlets that makes! It is a commonplace also that this ease of identification with a character is a test of genius in a writer and ranks him in power and significance. Those who create so are called the universal writers. Whence arises this paradox, so common in art, of infinite diversity in identity? It comes from the fact that, so far from realizing the image as it was in the artist's mind and receiving it charged with his personality merely, it is we ourselves who create the image by charging it with our own personality. In this creation we do not simply repeat in ourselves his state of mind and become as it were ghosts of him who is dead; but we originate something new, living and our own. There is no other way for us to appropriate his work, to interpret it and understand it. The fact is that a work of art,

being once created and expressed, externalized, is gone from the artist's mind and returns to the world of nature; it becomes a part of our external world, and we treat it precisely as we treat the rest of that world, as mere material for our own artist-life which goes on in our own minds and souls in the exercise of our own powers in their limitations. Our appropriation of art is as strictly held within these bounds as is our grasp upon the material world.

It is one of the charms of art that it is not to be completely understood. In an age in which so high a value is put upon facts, information, positive knowledge, it is a relief to have still reserved to us a place apart where it is not necessary to know all. The truth of science is stated in a formula of mathematics, a law of physics, a generalization of one or another kind; it is clear, and it is all contained there; in each specific case there is nothing more to be known. The truth of art is of a different sort; it does not seem to be all known, finished and finally stated, but on the contrary to be ever growing, more rich in significance, more profound in substance, disclosing heaven over heaven and depth under

depth. The greatest books share our lives, and grow old with us; we read them over and over, and at each decade it is a new book that we find there, so much has it gained in meaning from experience of life, from ripening judgment, from the change of seasons in the soul. The poetry of Wordsworth is a typical instance of such a book. It is the same with the artists, with sculptors and musicians. Art of all sorts has this life-long increment of value, and whoever has experienced this easily realizes to what a degree and how constantly the reader's intelligence, cultivation and experience are controlling and limiting factors in his power to appropriate what is before him. In art he appropriates only a part of what the work contains. It is thus that the great artists, Shakspere, Dante, Virgil, are life-long studies.

A second but powerful limitation lies in those differences of temperament, just referred to, which have an arbitrary potency in appreciation. The practical man is, as a rule, really self-excluded from the field of art; but, inside the field, the stoic will not make much of Byron nor the cynic of Shelley. In certain arts,

such as the many kinds of prints, a special training of the eye and some technical knowledge of processes must be acquired before one really sees what the eye itself must discover in the engraving in order to apprehend its subtle qualities. The way, however, is most commonly blocked by certain inhibitions which are so lodged in the mind by education and opinion that they effectively paralyze any effort at re-creation. I remember once, years ago, when I was myself a student, meeting on a western train out of Buffalo a clergyman who kindly engaged me in conversation; and I, being but a boy, repaid his interest by flooding him with my enthusiasms for George Eliot and Scott, who happened to be then my ascendant stars. I recall well his final reply, — "Young man," he said, "I never read anything that is n't true." What an inhibition that was, in his literary and artistic career! I have since wondered if he found much to read. Ideal truth, as you perceive, had never dawned upon his mind, — and that is the finer and happier part of truth. The prejudice of the early New England church against the theatre is a curious instance of an inhibition

that rendered nugatory a great historic branch of art, the drama; and it is the more singular, viewed as a religious phenomenon, because of the great place the drama held in religion itself in Catholic countries and especially in mediaeval times. What Puritan could read the sacred drama of Spain with any understanding? I have friends who object to war as a theme of verse, and the praise of wine by the poets is anathema in many quarters. These are all examples of moral inhibitions bred in the community and operating against great divisions of literature. What a sword of destruction that would be which would strike Mars and Bacchus from the world's poetry! The American inhibition, however, which best illustrates what I have in mind, is that which rejects the nude in sculpture and painting, not only forfeiting thereby the supreme of Greek genius and sanity, but to the prejudice, also, of human dignity, as it seems to me. Such inhibitions in one way and another exist in communities and individuals; the appreciation of literature, and of art in general, is subject to them; and I cite these examples to bring out clearly how true it

...st involuntarily and unconsciously, in re-creating the work of art we remake it in ourselves and not in its own old world, and the meaning we charge it with is our own personality and not that of its original creator. If I look with shamed eyes at Hermes, Narcissus and Venus, the shame is mine, and not the sculptor's; if I cannot read the old verses on Agincourt with sympathy and delight in their heroic breath, the poverty of soul is mine, not Drayton's. In every way, the responsibility for what we make of art, in re-creating it, springs from what we are. We give our own image to it, just as the original artist did.

It is plain that, in consequence of our various limitations in faculty, knowledge, experience, temperament and working always with some subjection to communal ideas and tastes, we must suffer many losses of what the work of art originally contained and fall short of realizing it as it was in the artist's mind. On the other hand there is some compensation in the fact that the work itself may take on new meanings that the artist did not dream of; for, in returning to the external world and becoming

a part of our real environment, the [illegible] has resumed that plastic quality which belongs to the world of nature and makes it material for us to mould our own souls in. The essence of the work, its living power for us, is not what the artist put in it, but what we draw from it; its world-value is not what it was to the artist, but what it is to the world. It is common enough for the reader to find meanings in a book that the writer did not consciously put there; there is much in personality that the artist himself is not aware of, and also there may be much in the work which he does not attend to, and hence there is excess of significance in both ways; and moreover, the reader may respond to the work with greater sensitiveness than belonged to the creator and in new ways. Thus arises the paradox which I often maintain, that it is not the poet, but the reader, who writes the poem.

This is more plainly seen when literature is looked at under the changing lights of time. New ages appropriate the works of the past by accomplishing a partial transformation in them, and unless art is capable of such a remaking,

it cannot last; it becomes merely archaic, historic, dead,—a thing for the scholar's museum. Homer has delighted ages, but it is through his capacity to live again in the battle-loving and travel-loving hearts of men; it is not because later generations have read the Iliad and the Odyssey as the Greeks read or heard them. Each age reads something into the text, as we say, and this "reading-in" is incessant in the history of art. It is well illustrated in the criticism of Pater, so frequently called creative criticism, and especially in his "Marius, the Epicurean,"—a marvellous blend of the modern spirit with ancient material,—but such "reading-in" is his most brilliant achievement in all his essays, whether they treat of Greek gods, like Dionysus, or French gallants, or Roman gentlemen; all his figures are developed in the dark chamber of his own singularly sensitive and refined artistic temperament. The same phenomenon occurs as characteristically, though in so contrasted a way, in the Puritan rehabilitation of the Old Testament at the time of the Civil War, when Agag and Naboth and their lives served as the eternal pattern of the

ideal for the Roundheads; and at the present day one often hears in orthodox churches a discourse which, so far as its figures and colors are concerned, always reminds me of antique tapestry and seems to belong to some Oriental art of expression rather than to our own tongue, manners and ideas. Literature, and indeed all art, has this magic to change the meaning without altering the signs. It was thus that the picturesque and mythologic side of Paganism, the poetic part, was taken up, absorbed and reëmbodied in the Catholicism of southern Europe, and lives to this day, little changed in outward seeming, by the old Mediterranean shores. Indeed, in much modern poetry I often find the necessity of translating the old signs into fresh meanings in order to keep the language alive to me. Poetic imagery is none too abundant, take it all together; we cannot afford to sacrifice much of it. Instead of abolishing battle and the wine-cup, the gods and the heroes, the Old Testament, and what not, it will be far wiser to use them in the service of our new ideals. Art, taken either as a language or in its individual works, has not one meaning, but many.

This is a part of the poet's subtle mystery that he declares he knows not what.

If you have followed these remarks with any sympathy and I have conveyed to you my belief that each of us has the artist-soul, continually engaged in its own creations, you will readily comprehend that works of art are not to me historical monuments valuable for the information they give of the past, nor even artistic entities to be known apart from ourselves and as they were in the artist's mind; but rather such works are only raw material, or at least new material, for us to make our own statues and pictures and poems out of; or, in a word, to create the forms of our own souls out of; for the soul must be given forms in order to be aware of its being, to know itself, truly to be. The soul moves toward self-expression in many ways, but in finding forms for itself the soul discovers its most plastic material in the world of art. It is in forms of ideality that the soul hastens to clothe itself; and while it is possible for us to elaborate such forms from the crude mass of nature, as the first artists did, yet later generations are the more fortunate in that they possess

in art and literature a vast treasure of ideality already elaborated and present. Works of art thus constitute a select material wherein the artist-soul that is in each of us can work, not only with our own native force of penetration and aspiration, but, as it were, with higher aid, — the aid of genius, the aid of the select souls of the race. It is true that the re-creation of old art which we accomplish is our own personal act, and cannot be otherwise; but the way is made easier for us, doors are opened, directions are indicated, light is shed on forward and unknown paths, sympathy, guidance and courage are given to us by companionship with the works of those, our forerunners, who have lived long in the soul's own world and left their testimony for us so far as we have skill to read in their text and understand in their spirit. This is the true service of art, — of the poets, painters, musicians, — to prepare the material of the soul's life so that those who are less fortunately endowed and more humble may more readily put on the spiritual garment that all must wear if they are to be souls, indeed, and live above the bodily sphere. There are other ways than

art, it is true, by which the soul comes into its own; but in the way of art it is by re-creating in ourselves the past forms of the spirit, vitally appropriating them and charging them with our own life, that we win most directly and happily to true self-knowledge of the wonderful creature that man is.

It has become plain, I trust, in what sense it is indeed true that it is the nature of art to cast off what is mortal and emancipate itself from the mind of its creator, and thus to enter upon a life of its own, continually renewed in the minds of those who appropriate it. This is its real immortality, — not the fact that it lasts through time, but that it lives in the souls of mankind. I am fond of biography, and few are the pleasures of the literary life that are more pure and precious than the quiet and unknown companionship which biography may establish between ourselves and those whose works have endeared to us their persons and interested us in their human fortunes as if they were friends; but I am always glad when time has destroyed all merely mortal record of them, and there remains only their work, — only the "souls of poets dead

and gone.'' It is only when fame shrinks to that narrow limit of the book or the deed, that it rises to its height. The Greek Anthology is a book of pure immortality because it has brought down with it so little of the alloy of temporal personality; and that clarity of fame, which seems almost a peculiarity of classical literature and antique art, gathering all its lustre often into one lonely name, is due, perhaps, most to this freedom from human detail. The poet, the sculptor, has come to live only in his work, where the immortal part of him found expression and lodgment while he was yet alive; all else was dust, and is in the tomb which is appointed for mortal things. It is better so, when the poet's memory itself becomes ideal, and the imagination paints its Dante and carves its Shelley after the image of the pure soul they left on earth when they departed hence. Even that soul, that personality which they incarnated in their art, suffers change and refinement. Only that element abides which can enter continuously and permanently into the souls of men, according to their several grades of being,—only that which can live in humanity; the rest fades away

with time. And then this miracle arises that into the soul of Virgil, for example, enters a Christian soul, new-born, and deepening its pathos; and not Virgil only, but many others, are, as it were, adopted into the race itself and become the ever growing children of the human spirit, ideals and fathers of ideals through ages. That is earthly immortality, — the survival and increment of the spirit through time. Thus arises another paradox, that as art begins by being charged with personality, it ends by becoming impersonal, solving the apparent contradiction in the soul universal, the common soul of mankind. Each of us creates art in his own image, — it seems an infinite variable; and yet it is the variable of something identical in all, — the soul. I often think that in the artistic life, and its wonderful spiritual interchange through the re-creation in each of the ideals of all, there is realized something analogous to the religious conception of the communion of saints, especially when one considers the impersonality of art in its climax of world-fame; for the communion of saints is not a communion of individual with individual, but of each

one with all. It is thus in the artistic life that one shares in the soul universal, the common soul of mankind, which yet is manifest only in individuals and their concrete works. Art like life has its own material being in the concrete, but the spiritual being of both is in the universal.

We have come, then, in our examination of criticism, or, in other words, of the act of appreciation, to the point I indicated last night in opening the subject, where criticism appears to be a private affair, a deeply personal act, such that every one of us must be his own artist. Each of us has the artist-soul, and if we enter truly into the world of art, it is not merely as spectators, but as participants, as ourselves the artists. It is on this activity of the soul in its artist-life that the whole subject concentrates its interest. I reminded you that from time to time in history our ancestors encountered successively alien literatures, and as each was in turn appropriated, a Renaissance resulted. It is thus that civilization has grown in body and quality, ever enriching itself by what it absorbs from this and that particular race and

age. Nothing can exceed in folly the policy and temper that would isolate nations and races one from another; it is from the intermingling of all, with their various gifts and labors, that the greatest good finally comes; and no sign of the times is so disturbing to me as the present reactionary tendency in America apparent in the growth of race-prejudice and a jealous contempt of the foreigner. In this respect the life of the individual is like that of nations. If he grows, it is often by a Renaissance attending the introduction of something novel into his life. You are all familiar with the splendid burst of the human spirit which attended the re-discovery of the ancient classic world in Italy, and you will recall how at a later time the re-discovery of the Middle Ages occasioned a similar flowering of art in the Gothic Renaissance, so variously fruitful in its turn in the last century. The parallel is easily found in individual life; such a profound and developing experience was the Italian journey for Goethe, the study of Plato and the Greek dramatists for Shelley, mythology for Keats,—and everywhere in literary biography one finds illustrations.

The most arresting trait of the artist-life, as one begins to lead it, is that it is a life of discovery. It is not truth that is discovered, but faculty; what results is not an acquisition of knowledge, but an exercise of inward power. The most wonderful thing in the soul is the extraordinary latency of power in it; and it is in the artist-life, in the world of art, that this latent power is most variously and brilliantly released. What happens to you when you begin to see, really to see, pictures, for example? It is not that a new object has come within the range of your vision; but that a new power of seeing has arisen in your eye, and through this power a new world has opened before you,—a world of such marvels of space, color and beauty, luminosity, shadow and line, atmosphere and disposition, that you begin to live in it as a child begins to learn to live in the natural world. It is not the old world seen piecemeal; it is a new world on another level of being than natural existence. So, when you begin to take in a poem, it is not a mere fanciful arrangement of idea and event added to your ordinary memory of things; new powers of feeling have

opened in your heart that constitute a fresh passion of life there, and as you feed it with lyric and drama, a significance, a mystery, a light enter into the universe as you know it, with transforming and exalting power. To the lover of pictures the visible world has become something other than it was,—even nature herself flowers with Corots and Manets, coruscates with Turners and Claudes, darkens with Rembrandts; to the lover of poetry also the visible world has suffered change and lies in the light of Wordsworth or of Shelley, but much more the invisible world of inward life is transformed into visions of human fate in Aeschylus and Shakspere, into throbs of passion in Dante and Petrarch, into cries of ecstasy and pain in how many generations of the poets world-wide. It is not that you have acquired knowledge; you have acquired heart. To lead the artist-life is not to look at pictures and read books; it is to discover the faculties of the soul, that slept unknown and unused, and to apply them in realizing the depth and tenderness, the eloquence, the hope and joy, of the life that is within. It is by this that the life of art differs from the life

of science: its end is not to know, but to be. The revolt against the historical treatment of art arises from a feeling that in such treatment art loses its own nature, and that what is truly life, and has its only value as life, is degraded into what is merely knowledge. I appreciate the worth and function of knowledge, and join with Tennyson in recognition of her rightful realm, but add with him,—

> "*Let her know her place;*
> *She is the second, not the first.*"

The first place is held by life. It is against the substitution of knowledge for life in scholarship, especially in the literary and artistic fields, that the protest is made.

A second main trait of the artist-life of the soul, for which I am, as it were, pleading, is that it is a life of growth by an inward secret and mysterious process. There is nothing mechanical in it; it is vital. It was this aspect of the soul's life which Wordsworth brought so prominently forward, and made elemental in his verse, advocating a "wise passiveness" in the conduct of the mind:

"*Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum*
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?"

"Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin." That is the type of the artist-soul; in the artist-life there is neither toiling nor spinning. In an economical civilization like ours, leisure is apt to be confounded with indolence, and it is hard to see how the poet watching

"*the sun illume*
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom,"

is not an idler in the land. Especially is it hard to see how things will come without planning. In our own day planning has become an all-engrossing occupation. A belief in organization has spread through the country, and is applied in all quarters of life, as if success were always a matter of machinery, and preferably of legislative machinery. Even in the churches, which have been the home of spiritual force, organization plays an ever increasing part, as if failure in driving-force could be made up for by appliances in the machine; to a certain extent this

is possible, but the driving force is not the machine. The practical reason so occupies all the field of our life that the result is to belittle and destroy whatever has not its ground of being in the useful. Art, by its own nature, excludes the useful. Art, in its creative process, discards the instrumentality of means to an end, in the sense of planning and intention; its process is inspirational, as we say,—a secret and mysterious growth. The artist, in generating his work,—the poem, statue, picture,—does not plan it; it comes to him. And when we, in our turn, look at what he has figured, or read what he has expressed, we do not plan what the result—the re-creation—will be in us; one of the most precious qualities of art is the divine surprise that attends its reception and realization in ourselves. There is a part of life where planning, the adjustment of means to an end, organization, and all that belongs in the practical sphere, has its place; but the growth of the soul proceeds on other principles and in another realm. This is Eucken's text. Our bodies and our mortal interests are subject to the world of use; but our spirituality, our immortal part,

is above use. The artist-life of the soul — and the soul's life is characteristically artistic — lies in the self-revelation of its own nature, and this is a growth which takes place in a world of beauty, passion, adoration, — in a word, of ideality, where what Wordsworth calls "our meddling intellect," the practical reason, has small part.

I well know how opposed this doctrine is to the ruling spirit of our time, which shrinks our lives to the limits of an economical and mechanical sphere, to use Eucken's phrases, and accustoms us to the dominance of their precepts and methods. Art with difficulty finds room among us. It is not by accident that our most literary temperament, Henry James, and our two great artists, Whistler and Sargent, have had their homes abroad, and that from the beginning the literature and art of America have often had their true locality on a foreign soil. Yet, whatever may be the seeming, it is always true that the soul grows, it is not made; and the world of art is chiefly precious to us because it is a place for the soul's growth.

3. A third main trait of the world of art is that

it is a place of freedom. I alluded to this briefly last evening. It is not merely that the soul is there freed from the manacles of utility and has escaped from the great burden of success in life; that is only the negative side. It has also, on the positive side, entered into a realm of new power, the exercise of which is its highest function. The soul transcends nature, and reconstitutes the world in the image of its own finer vision and deeper wisdom, realizing ideality in its own consciousness and conveying at least the shadow of its dream to mankind. It transcends nature in creating form. The Hermes of Praxiteles, whether or not one knows it is Hermes and discerns in it the godlike nature, gives to all ages a figure such as nature never shaped. The soul, also, in its artist-life, transcends nature in idea; each of us, in reading the play, may believe he is Hamlet, but each is well aware that he is identifying himself with a more perfect type of himself, such as is known only to the mind's eye. And, similarly, the soul transcends nature in the field of the relations of things; it builds up an Arcadia, an earthly Paradise, an ideal state, a forest of Arden, an

island-kingdom of Prospero, a Round Table, a school of Athens, a Last Judgment, a legend of the Venusberg,—what not?—so vast and various is the imaginary world wherein the soul from the beginning has bodied forth that inner vision and wisdom in which it finds its true self-consciousness. So great is its freedom there that, as is often said, it transcends also the moral world, and so far as morals belong in the sphere of mere human utility and social arrangement, this must be granted; but the subject is too large and complicated to be entered upon here. I allude to it only to emphasize and bring out fully the doctrine that the soul exercises in its artist-life an unchartered freedom; for it is not concerned there with practical results of any kind, but only with the discovery of its nature, both active and passive. The fruit of this large freedom is the ideal world, in which each realizes his dream of the best. It is here that experiments are made, that revolutions sometimes begin; for the ideal, as I have said, once expressed, passes back into the ordinary world, and there it may be made a pattern, a thing to be actualized, and it falls

under the dominance of the practical reason and has this or that fortune according to the wisdom or folly of mankind at the time. The ideal world is very mutable in different ages and races; and history is full of its debris. It is not an everlasting city set in the heavens that shall some time descend upon the earth in a millennium; it is a dream, the dream of the soul in its creative response to the world about it. Yet there is nothing insubstantial about the dream; however unrealized in the external world of fact, it is spiritually real, for it is lived in the soul,—it is the conscious life of the soul. There are times, however, when the ideal world does enter into the actual world, and partly permeate it, if it does not wholly master it. The classic, the chivalric, the Christian world attest the fact, broadly; and in individual life how must we ourselves bear witness to the mingling in ourselves of the poets' blood, —which is the blood of the world. In the intimacy of this communion is our best of life, and it is accomplished solely by the re-creation in us, in our minds and hearts, our hopes, admirations and loves, of what was first in the

artists of every sort, according to our capacity to receive and reëmbody in our own spiritual substance their finer, wiser, deeper power. Their capacity to enter thus into the life of humanity is the measure of their genius, and our capacity to receive the gift is the measure of our souls.

Such in its main lines is the artist-life of the soul, a life of discovery, of growth, of freedom; but what is most precious in it, and most characterizes it, is a prophetic quality that abides in its experiences. The poets are often spoken of as prophets, and in history the greatest are those most lonely peaks that seem to have taken the light of an unrisen dawn, like Virgil, whose humanity in the Aeneid shines with a foregleam of the Christian temperament, or like Plato, whose philosophy in many a passage was a morning star that went before the greater light of Christian faith in the divine. But it is not such poets and such prophecy that I have in mind. I mean that in our own experiences in this artist-life with the poets, sculptors and musicians there abides the feeling that we shall have, as Tennyson says, "the wages of going

on,"—there is our clearest intimation of immortality. Wordsworth found such intimations in fragments of his boyhood and youth. I find them rather in fragments of manhood and maturer life. Life impresses me less as a birth initially out of the divine into mortal being than as birth into the divine at each step of the onward way. I am always fearful that in such statements, and in such a discourse as this has been, I may seem to be speaking of exceptional things, of life that is only for the select and methods that are practicable only for the few and for men specially endowed with rare temperaments. Nothing could be further from my own belief. The artist-life of the soul is common to all, as soon as the soul begins to be and breathe, for it is in the world of art that the soul lives. The child with his picture-book and the dying Laureate reading the Shaksperian "Dirge" in the moonlight lead the same life and follow the same method. The boy with Homer, the sage with Plato,—it is all one: each is finding his soul, and living in it. The herb of grace grows everywhere. I have never such firm conviction of the divine meaning that abides

in our life as when I notice how the soul puts forth its flower in the humblest lives and in the most neglected places, what deeds of the spirit are simply done by the poor and almost as if they did not know it. It is true that human life is an animal existence, and the sphere of the useful is primary in it; the necessity for earning one's food, building one's lodging, caring for one's offspring, governs our days and years; but if I am in favor of social betterment and a more just economic order in the state to lessen the burden of common life and free it from an animal enslavement, it is not that I am thinking so much of what is called the welfare of the masses, in the sense of comfort. It is because I desire for them the leisure which would leave their souls room to grow. I should be sorry to see material comfort, which is an animal good, become the ideal of the state, as now seems the tendency. We are all proud of America, and look on our farms and workshops, the abundance of work, the harvest of universal gain dispersed through multitudes reclaimed from centuries of poverty,—we see and proclaim the greatness of the good; but I am ill-content with

the spiritual harvest, with the absence of that which has been the glory of great nations in art and letters, with the indifference to that principle of human brotherhood in devotion to which our fathers found greatness and which is most luminous in art and letters; our enormous success in the economical and mechanical sphere leaves me unreconciled to our failure to enter the artistic sphere as a nation.

There is always, however, as you know, "a remnant." It is true that the conditions of our time almost enforce upon our citizens, especially as they grow old and become absorbed in the work of the world, so abundant and compelling here,—it is true that these conditions almost enforce a narrowly practical life. But there is one period of life when this pressure is less felt, and when nature herself seems to open the gateways for this artist-life that I have been speaking of: it is youth. I hope some random sentence, perhaps, may have made it easier for some one of you who are young, to believe in that world, to follow its beckoning lights and to lead its life.

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